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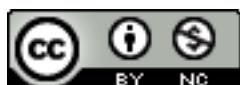
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Authority and Control in the Interior of Asia Minor, Seventh–Ninth Centuries

James Howard-Johnston

1 Asia Minor and the Onset of the War for Survival: Cities, Villages and Fortresses

Byzantium cannot be demarcated clearly from its greater, antecedent, imperial self. The name is a term of art, used to pick out the most Roman of the Roman successor states. Continuity being so marked in terms of constitution, institutions (notably those which sustained a traditional fiscal prowess), infrastructure and, not least, culture and religion, the east Roman empire simply shades into a reduced but still ideologically potent early medieval state. But change was forced upon it from without, by successive defeats at the hands of Muslims, by successive losses of territory to the Muslim *umma*. At the beginning of the eighth century, the authority of east Roman emperors was confined to a well-defended but exposed capital city, enclaves in the far west (Sicily, southern Italy and the exarchate of Ravenna) and north-east (part of the Crimea and the western Caucasus), tracts in the western, southern and south-eastern Balkans (often under no more than nominal Roman control), the islands of the Aegean, and one substantial, defensible land-mass, Asia Minor. Asia Minor became the heartland of the rump-empire from the 640s, its most important resource-base, the great eastern bulwark of Constantinople. Explanations for the extraordinary resilience shown by Byzantium in its 200-year-long battle for survival and the success ultimately achieved have to be sought as much in the evolving structures, social, economic, administrative, of Asia Minor as in policies formulated at the centre and the ideology which underpinned the will to fight on.¹

¹ This paper represents views developed over many years of reading and teaching. Pupils, undergraduate, graduate and, in one case, virtual, have contributed much. I am particularly indebted to Mark Whittow (for his counter-suggestibility), Peter Sarris (for the solution to the urban conundrum), Peter Thonemann (for clarifying the tax system), Nicole Mangion (for research on al-Djarmi and Ibn Khurradādbih), and Adam Izdebski (for his palynological synthesis).

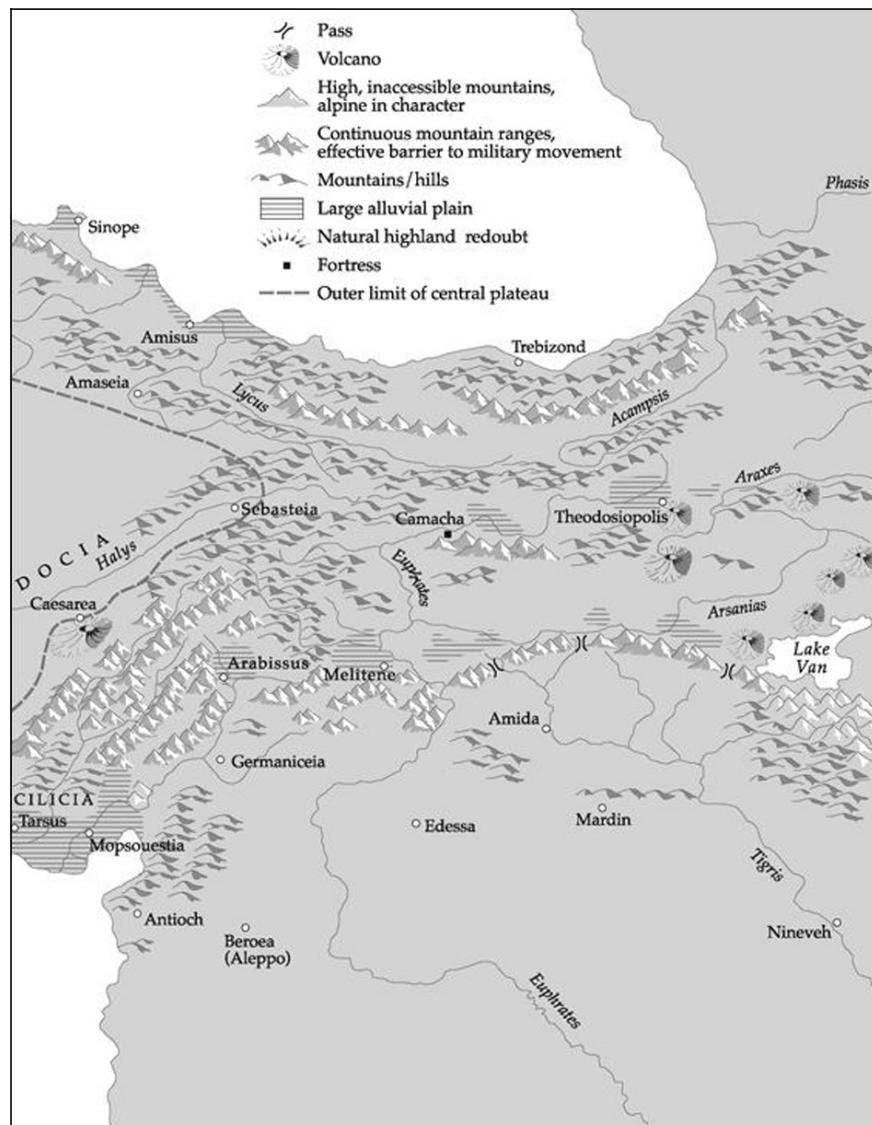


FIGURE 4.1 Map of Asia Minor

FROM HOWARD-JONHSTON, *WITNESSES TO A WORLD CRISIS*, XXXIII



FIGURE 4.2 Map of Asia Minor

FROM HOWARD-JOHNSTON, *WITNESSES TO A WORLD CRISIS*, XXXIV

Three main zones may be distinguished in Asia Minor. First the coastlands, reduced for the most part to narrow strips between sea and mountains in the north and the south, but broadening out into extensive riverine plains to the west and north-west. There was more remodelling of settlements and societies there than in the other two zones at the end of antiquity. They were highly urbanised. Great cities – Nicomedia, Nicaea, Prusa, Smyrna, Pergamum, Ephesus, Miletus, Attaleia – were the nodal points in dense networks of smaller cities and market centres extending deep into their hinterlands. With easy access to the sea, their populations and those of the surrounding country could sell surplus products, agricultural and manufactured, to distant markets. All the coastlands, but especially the Lycian strip, flourished during the years of economic growth from the fourth to the early seventh century, lying as they did along the commercial axis connecting Alexandria and the cities of the Levant with Constantinople. Even the Justinianic plague was not able to do more than temporarily puncture the commercial boom.²

The long defensive war for survival, which, from the late 640s, embraced the maritime sphere as well as involving large-scale action by land, proved far

² Clive Foss, "The Lycian Coast in the Byzantine Age," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 48 (1994): 1–52; John Liebeschuetz, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman City* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 30–54; René Bondoux, "Les villes," in *La Bithynie au Moyen Âge*, eds. Bernard Geyer and Jacques Lefort, *Réalités Byzantines* 9 (Paris: P. Lethielleux, 2003), 377–409.

more damaging than disease. Once the Muslims had taken control of Palestine (635), Syria (636) and Egypt (643) and had consolidated their position, they were able to use the resources, material and human, of the trading cities which they controlled, to mobilise powerful naval strike forces. The history of Muslim-Byzantine relations from the middle of the seventh century to 718 is one in which naval warfare loomed large. The climaxes, three of them, came when the metropolitan area came under attack by sea (in 654 [in conjunction with an invasion of Asia Minor], 670–671, 717–718). Serious damage was inflicted on city life in what had been flourishing coastal provinces on the sea-lanes from Egypt and the Levant to Constantinople. Cities in strong natural positions or with substantial resources of their own were transformed into hardpoint fortresses, the nodal points in regional defensive systems. They all shrank in size, shedding outer quarters, falling back on their central areas or ancient citadels, ruthlessly quarrying abandoned monuments for building material. There was a general movement inland, into the less accessible highlands.³

The mountain ranges backing on to the coastlands constituted, as of course they still constitute, the second component part of Asia Minor – (1) in the south the Taurus which describes a flat concave arc from east to west between Cilicia and Lycia, (2) in the north and north-west the well-wooded Pontic mountains, and (3) the more easily transected hills and mountains of the west. To these should be added the easternmost section of the Taurus, where it forms a massive barrier separating Cappadocia from Cilicia, and its prolongation in the Anti-Taurus which splay out into some seven discrete ridges running towards the Euphrates. Taurus and Anti-Taurus formed the outer bulwark of Byzantium's eastern defences. Without these formidable natural barriers to shield the interior of Asia Minor from the political and military centre of the Umayyad caliphate in Syria, it is impossible to conceive of Byzantium's maintaining its political and cultural autonomy in the face of the initial Arab outrush from the desert. Difficult, hilly terrain on both banks of the Euphrates extended these natural defences north, completing the exterior mountain circuit. There were, however, two relatively inviting east-west routes through western Armenia (down the Arsanias and the upper course of the Euphrates) which led on

3 James Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses to a World Crisis: Historians and Histories of the Middle East in the Seventh Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 461–516; Philipp Niewöhner, "Archäologie und die 'Dunklen Jahrhunderte' im byzantinischen Anatolien," in *Post-Roman Towns, Trade and Settlement in Europe and Byzantium*, vol. 2, *Byzantium, Pliska, and the Balkans*, ed. Joachim Henning, Millennium-Studien 5 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2007), 119–157.

and up onto the Asia Minor plateau. On this eastern front, Byzantium owed its survival to the Armenian princes and lords who penned the Muslims back into a number of discrete colonial enclaves.⁴

We know relatively little about the mountain zone in antiquity, beyond the far from surprising phenomenon of its refractoriness. The Taurus and eastern Pontic ranges were the principal *terres d'insolence* of Asia Minor. It took the Romans much effort over several decades to achieve the effective pacification and romanisation of the main highland regions. In the Taurus, from Pisidia to Isauria, Augustus' campaign of pacification involved the concentrated use of force both before and after the infrastructure of roads and colonial foundations had been put in place. Far away to the north-east, Tzania was only brought under firm government control by an intensive development programme in the early sixth century. It is impossible to say whether the resources of the highlands, apart from their military manpower, were tapped fully by the late Roman state. But what may be asserted with some confidence, despite the lack of directly pertinent evidence, is that the highlanders were not alienated from its Byzantine successor. Apart from a single short episode, when they, along with the inhabitants of the central plateau and the lowlanders of the coast, all submitted to the commander-in-chief of a large Muslim invasion army in 654, they remained loyal citizens. There was no rash of rebellions, no tendency of leading figures to bid for untrammeled rule in the localities. The immigration of lowlanders, their withdrawal to more secure habitats in the skirts of the mountains, seems to have deepened the highlanders' sense of belonging to an overarching Christian Roman state, rather than generating antagonism. Highland society itself, being less subject to depredation by Muslim raiders, more fluid than that of the open lands outside, less pervious to the norms and laws of the settled, ordered world, was probably relatively unaffected by the prolonged crisis of the early middle ages.⁵

4 Naval Intelligence Division, *Geographical Handbook Series: Turkey* (Oxford: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1942), 1:154–159, 180–187; Timothy Mitford, *East of Asia Minor: Rome's Hidden Frontier* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017); Robert Hewsen, *Armenia: A Historical Atlas* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 14–19, 100–111.

5 Stephen Mitchell, *Anatolia: Land, Men, and Gods in Asia Minor*, vol. 1, *The Celts in Anatolia and the Impact of Roman Rule* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 70–79, 234–235; Keith Hopwood, "Policing the Hinterland: Rough Cilicia and Isauria," in *Armies and Frontiers in Roman and Byzantine Anatolia*, ed. Stephen Mitchell, British Archeological Reports, International Series 156 (Oxford: British Archeological Reports, 1983), 173–187; Keith Hopwood, "Towers, Territory and Terror: How the East was Held," in *The Defence of the Roman and Byzantine East*, eds. Philip Freeman and David Kennedy, British Archeological Reports, International Series 297 (Oxford: British Archeological Reports, 1986), 343–358; Keith Hopwood, "Consent and Con-

So we turn finally to the third zone, the interior plateau, which takes the shape of a large, inverted triangle, extending from the headwaters of the Sangarius river in the north-west to those of the Halys in the north-east and south to the hot plains of Lycaonia. The Anatolian plateau, open, treeless, easily traversed, links together Asia Minor's mountain peripheries and their outlying hills and valleys. The relatively few and widely separated cities of classical antiquity acted as stepping-stones for overland travel and road-based cabotage. The terrain to be crossed was and is far from homogeneous. There is a region of great lakes in Pisidia in the south-west. High volcanoes – Erciyas Dağ and Hasan Dağ – dominate the tufa landscape of Cappadocia in the south-east, where cones of wind-eroded rock congregate together in hollows and where streams have cut mini-canyons across open country. Unlike the yet greater plateau of Iran far to the east, the Anatolian interior lies within the sweep of the Mediterranean climatic system. So there is enough, in some cases just enough, precipitation, in the form of snow and rain, to sustain agriculture without recourse to irrigation, except for a central region around the Tuz Gölü. It is, for the most part, a very different world from the desiccated, salt-encrusted *kavirs* which make the interior of Iran inhospitable and perilous to travellers. While there may be little variation in its colouring – various shades of tan and ochre – there is plenty of variation in relief. The plateau undulates. There are many distinct ranges of hills, some packed together to form isolated, natural redoubts – for example the Melendiz Dağ in western Cappadocia, the Emir Dağları south of Amorium, and the Phrygian highlands. Perennial rivers pick their way between

trol: How the Peace was Kept in Rough Cilicia," in *The Eastern Frontier of the Roman Empire*, eds. David French and Chris Lightfoot, British Archeological Reports, International Series 553 (Oxford: British Archeological Reports, 1989), 191–201; James Howard-Johnston, "Procopius, Roman Defences North of the Taurus and the New Fortress of Citharizon," in *The Eastern Frontier of the Roman Empire: Proceedings of a Colloquium held at Ankara in September 1988*, eds. David French and Chris Lightfoot, British Archeological Reports, International Series 553 (Oxford: British Archeological Reports, 1989), 215–220, repr. in James Howard-Johnston, *East Rome, Sasanian Persia and the End of Antiquity: Historiographical and Historical Studies*, no. II, Variorum Collected Studies (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006); Michael Maas, "Delivered from their Ancient Customs": Christianity and the Question of Cultural Change in Early Byzantine Ethnography," in *Conversion in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages: Seeing and Believing*, eds. Kenneth Mills and Anthony Grafton (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2003), 160–169; Michael Whitby, "Recruitment in Roman Armies from Justinian to Heraclius (ca. 565–615)," in *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East*, vol. 3, *States, Resources and Armies*, ed. Averil Cameron (Princeton: Darwin Press, 1995), 66–68, 82–85; Robert Thomson and James Howard-Johnston, *The Armenian History Attributed to Sebeos*, Translated Texts for Historians 31 (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1999), 144–146 (translation), 274–276 (historical commentary).

them, laying down strips of green which broaden out intermittently to form larger depressions, *ovas*, the natural foci of agrarian life.⁶

The Anatolian plateau has always had the potential to be the breadbasket of the eastern Mediterranean. Hills as well as plains and valleys can be ploughed up to grow cereals, in huge quantities (enough to feed much of the population of modern Turkey, which has tripled since my first visit in 1965). To fly over the plateau in summer is to cross a landscape pock-marked with threshing-floors. In antiquity and the middle ages, however, without the benefit of cheap overland transport for produce in bulk, and with a relatively small population, there was no incentive to go beyond satisfying local demand. Agriculture therefore yielded to stock-raising as the primary economic activity. Cattle, sheep and horses could be raised in large numbers on rain-fed pastures, and could generate good cash returns. Given that livestock were self-propelled and could be driven with minimum cost to markets, near and distant, there was money to be made from pastoral products, both meat (brought on the hoof to cities) and the raw material for cloth and leather manufacturing. Hence the rapid growth in the first and second centuries A.D. of large estates, both private and imperial, on the western reaches of the plateau, in Galatia and Phrygia. Hence too the development of certain western cities – notably Philadelphia, Hierapolis and Laodiceia – as centers of production for woollen cloth and leather goods.⁷

This bias in favor of the pastoral economy was accentuated in the age of unremitting warfare which set in from the middle decades of the seventh century. For livestock, unlike crops, could be moved to safety. A regular procedure was elaborated by the military authorities for the speedy and orderly evacuation of men and animals from the line of likely enemy attack.⁸ On occasion, despite these measures, livestock were caught and driven off, sometimes in very large numbers.⁹ But in stable climatic conditions and with grazing aplenty,

⁶ Naval Intelligence Division, *Turkey*, 1:160–168; Mitchell, *Anatolia*, 1:1, 143–145.

⁷ Mitchell, *Anatolia*, 1:146, 149–160; Harry Pleket, “Greek Epigraphy and Comparative Ancient History: Two Case Studies,” *Epigraphica Anatolica* 12 (1988): 29–37; Peter Thonemann, *The Maeander Valley: A Historical Geography from Antiquity to Byzantium* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 185–190.

⁸ Nicephoras Phocas, *De velitatione*, ed. and trans. Gilbert Dagron and Haralambie Mihăescu as: *Le traité sur la guérilla de l’Empereur Nicéphore Phocas (963–969)* (Paris: Editions du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1986), 38–39, 50–53, 74–77, 114–117, 120–121, with commentary 225–231.

⁹ See, for example Alexander Vasiliev, *Byzance et les Arabes*, vol. 2, book 1, *La dynastie macédonienne (867–959)*, eds. Henri Grégoire and Marius Canard (Brussels: Institut de philologie et d’histoire orientales, 1968), 250, 263 for the large numbers reportedly taken by the emir of Tarsus in the 920s (8,000 horses and 200,000 sheep in 923, 300,000 sheep in 927).

a temporary emphasis on breeding as against meat-production would rebuild herds and flocks in a short time. Recent study of scientifically sampled pollen residues, taken from lake sediments, together with archaeological survey work, has documented declines in settlement and in the cultivation of cereals and orchard trees on the southern side of the plateau region in the early middle ages (seventh–ninth centuries), which are likely to have been accompanied by a shift to pastoralism – (1) in the territory of Sagalassus, now deprived of its old urban center (reduced to a small fortified settlement), where villages were fewer and smaller than they had been in late antiquity, and an expansion of grazing which became marked after the eleventh century was already under way, (2) in the Konya plain where there is clear evidence of population decline after a phase of intensified exploitation and settlement in late antiquity, and (3) in the area north of the Cilician Gates in southern Cappadocia where agricultural land was abandoned, rural areas were depopulated and secondary woodland expanded, a trend only reversed from the middle of the tenth century when grazing expanded hand in hand with cultivation.¹⁰ In the north, to judge by the evidence gathered in Paphlagonia, pastoralism reached an apogee in the middle of the eighth century, when there began a phase of agricultural expansion and population growth, resulting, it may be argued, from a migration of population to a relatively secluded region far from the frontier zone.¹¹

Muslim invasions and raiding expeditions brought about a grand cull of cities in the interior of Asia Minor. It had, of course, been thoroughly urbanized in the course of classical antiquity, but thorough urbanization did not entail a thick carpeting of cities. The major centers of population gravitated towards the edges of the plateau, their location being determined by accessibility on

¹⁰ Hannelore Vanhaverbeke, Athanasios Vionis, Jeroen Poblome and Marc Waelkens, "What Happened after the seventh Century AD? A Different Perspective on Post-Roman Rural Anatolia," in *Archaeology of the Countryside in Medieval Anatolia*, eds. Tasha Vorderstrasse and Jacob Roodenberg (Leiden: Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten, 2009), 177–190; Douglas Baird, "Settlement Expansion on the Konya Plain, Anatolia: fifth–seventh Centuries A.D.," in *Recent Research in the Late Antique Countryside*, eds. William Bowden, Luke Lavan and Carlos Machado, *Late Antique Archaeology 2* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 219–246; Warren Eastwood, Osman Gümüşçü, Hakan Yiğitbaşoğlu, John Haldon and Ann England, "Integrating Palaeoecological and Archaeo-Historical Records: Land Use and Landscape Change in Cappadocia (Central Turkey) since Late Antiquity," in *Archaeology of the Countryside*, eds. Tasha Vorderstrasse and Jacob Roodenberg (Leiden: Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten, 2009), 45–69; Adam Izdebski, *A Rural Economy in Transition: Asia Minor from Late Antiquity into the Early Middle Ages*, *Journal of Juristic Papyrology*, Supplement 18 (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2013), 156–159, 198–201.

¹¹ Izdebski, *Rural Economy in Transition*, 194–198.

the road-system and the availability of good agricultural land.¹² As such they were prime targets for depredation by Muslim armies. An early priority for the Byzantine government was to strengthen their defenses, where necessary, so that they could withstand direct assault by large hostile forces. Major improvement work cannot be pin-pointed in time in many cases, partly because of the atrophying of the epigraphic habit, partly because physical vestiges of past structures have been recycled and lost in cities which have survived to the present day.¹³ But it may be conjectured that urgent refurbishment was carried out first at the most exposed sites, which were those on the outer edges of the plateau (Sebasteia, Iconium, and, if needed, Caesarea within its reduced, Justinianic circuit) and in the Lycian and Aegean coastlands (the firmest date, in the reign of Constantine IV [669–685], is that obtainable for the construction of a hard-point fortress at Sardis, from associated roadworks).¹⁴ A second phase involved the upgrading of the defenses of cities such as Acroenus, Cotyaeum, Dorylaeum, Amorium, Ancyra and Amaseia, which lay well away from the new frontier, along the western, north-western and northern edges of the plateau. In some cases, as at Cotyaeum and Ancyra, this involved the construction of new fortresses with formidable defenses on natural strongpoints within the city. Projects belonging to this second phase should be dated to the eighth century, when Asia Minor was exposed to wide-ranging Arab attacks and such strategic strongholds were most needed. Much of the work was probably put in hand during lulls in fighting, the first following the great siege of Constantinople in 717–718 and the second lasting nearly a generation from the middle to the 740s to ca. 770, before and after the Abbasid revolution.¹⁵

¹² Mitchell, *Anatolia*, 1:80–99.

¹³ For the best recent survey of the material evidence, see Niewöhner, “Archäologie,” 125–135 and Philipp Niewöhner, “Byzantinische Stadtmauern in Anatolien: vom Statussymbol zum Bollwerk gegen die Araber,” in *Neue Forschungen zu antiken Stadtbefestigungen im östlichen Mittelmeerraum und im Vorderen Orient*, eds. Janet Lorentzen, Felix Pirson, Peter Schneider and Ulrike Wulf-Rheidt, *Byzas* 10 (İstanbul: Ege Yayımları, 2010), 239–260.

¹⁴ The completion of the work at Sardis is securely dated to the reign of Constantine IV (669–685). See Mark Whittow, *Social and Political Structures in the Maeander Region of Western Asia Minor on the Eve of the Turkish Invasion* (PhD diss., University of Oxford, 1987), 51–71, revising Clive Foss, *Byzantine and Turkish Sardis* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976), 57–60. Contraction of Caesarea city wall under Justinian: Procopius, *De aedificiis*, v. 4.7–14, in *Procopius*, vol 7: *On Buildings, General Index*, ed. and trans. H.B. Dewing (Cambridge, MA: Loeb, 1971).

¹⁵ The most useful studies of individual fortifications: Clive Foss, *Survey of Medieval Castles of Anatolia I: Kütahya*, British Archeological Reports, International Series 261 (Oxford: British Archeological Reports, 1985), whose dating of the initial construction of the fortress to the ninth century (pp. 80–83) should be revised; Chris Lightfoot and Mücahid Light-

The selection of this handful of cities for preservation was a striking example of the capacity of the imperial government to impose its will on the localities. For it entailed the condemnation of a much larger number of lesser cities to extinction as cities in the fraught decades of defensive warfare which followed. Thus the cities of south-west Cappadocia, each with its coterie of prominent citizens who can be seen playing active parts in ecclesiastical politics in the fourth century, vanished in the early middle ages.¹⁶ Mocisus was a rare exception. Justinian had moved it from an open, exposed position to a safer, more secluded site in the skirts of the Hasan Dağ. There it survived, perhaps as late as the eleventh century, with its large complement of churches.¹⁷

Villages were likewise affected by the general shrinkage of population on the margins and in the interior of the plateau, the cumulative effect of attrition in war over several generations. They declined in size and number, and tended to migrate outwards into the folds of the surrounding mountains. But the village remained the basic unit of population and came to be regarded as the fundamental component of the early medieval Byzantine state. There was no question therefore of the wholesale erasure of nucleated settlements, the principal marker of human presence, from the plateau region. The principal tasks of local defense forces were to inhibit raiding by Arab forays of villages clustering in fertile, relatively well-watered basins, and, where attack was likely, to escort the inhabitants and their livestock to safety.¹⁸

The peasant, as small-scale cultivator, had less to lose than an estate-owner and was a much less attractive prey. Neither his house – a nondescript structure of mud-brick or stone – nor his stock of grain – easy to conceal in an underground silo – was likely to attract any special attention from raiding armies.¹⁹

foot, *Amorium: A Byzantine City in Anatolia: An Archaeological Guide* (Istanbul: Homer Kitabevi, 2007), 70–79, 104–111, 144–149; Clive Foss, “Late Antique and Byzantine Ankara,” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 31 (1977): 74–77; and, for comparative purposes, James Crow and Stephen Hill, “The Byzantine Fortifications of Amastris in Paphlagonia,” *Anatolian Studies* 45 (1995): 251–265.

¹⁶ Neil McLynn, “The Taxman and the Theologian: Gregory, Hellenius, and the Monks of Nazianzus,” in *Re-Reading Gregory of Nazianzus: Essays on History, Theology, and Culture*, ed. Christopher Beeley, Catholic University of America Studies in Early Christianity (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2012), 178–195.

¹⁷ Procopius, *De aedificiis*, v. 4.15–18. The extant remains, spread over some 45–50 hectares, are described by Albrecht Berger, “Viranşehir (Mokisos), eine byzantinische Stadt in Kappadokien,” *Istanbuler Mitteilungen* 48 (1998): 349–429. The identification is secure, despite the absence of visible evidence of the circuit wall built by Justinian according to Procopius.

¹⁸ Nicephorus Phocas, *De velitatione*, cc. 2.1, 9.8–12, 10, 12, 17, 18, 22, with commentary at 195–214, 225–231.

¹⁹ Klaus Belke, “Das byzantinische Dorf in Zentralanatolien,” in *Les villages dans l’Empire*

Houses might be destroyed, portable goods and equipment left behind at the time of temporary evacuation might be plundered by forays which chose to target particular villages. But the peasant could set himself up again, especially if help was at hand, either from government (known to have provided seed-corn and capital, in the form of cash and three years' tax relief, for new settlers [Arab prisoners-of-war who had converted to Christianity] in the tenth century),²⁰ or from kin and connections who had suffered less. The resilience of peasant society in the face of hardships of many sorts (and, of course, of social pressure from without) should not be underestimated. It would take extended periods of danger involving repeated damaging attacks (or a ruthless and sustained campaign by a strong state) to persuade individuals to abandon the land in which their family had invested their labor, possibly over many generations, not to mention the consequent neglect of the graves of their ancestors. Migration should be envisaged as a last resort in desperate times.²¹

Direct measures were taken to preserve the resources of the country, and above all the peasant households which constituted villages, in times of danger. Refuges of several sorts, where they (and their animals) could survive enemy attacks, were provided. Much of the work and expense probably fell on the localities. The role of government was to act as catalyst and coordinator of infrastructure projects, which, besides improvement projects at selected cities, involved construction of fortresses (larger and smaller) in naturally strong positions, and encouragement of local initiatives in developing or improving underground shelters (mainly in Cappadocia).²² These were state-sponsored building projects, to which, besides some funding, the authorities, either central (in the case of major projects) or local, assuredly contributed expertise (from military architects) and some labor (the soldier who had always been expected to act as building laborer as well as fighting man). There is, it should be stressed, no evidence whatsoever of moves to create private strongholds by local nota-

byzantin (IVe–XVe siècle), eds. Jacques Lefort, Cécile Morrisson and Jean-Pierre Sodini (Paris: Lethielleux, 2005), 425–435.

²⁰ Constantinus Porphyrogenitus, *De ceremoniis aulae byzantinae*, ii.49, ed. J.J. Reiske, *Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae* 17 (Bonn: E. Weber, 1829), 694.22–695.14.

²¹ Yuri Slezkine, *The House of Government: A Saga of the Russian Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017), 421–453.

²² Major government-funded projects above ground: nn. 13–15 above. Fortresses: nn. 26–29 below. Subterranean refuges: Roberto Bixio, Vittorio Castellani and Claudio Succhiarelli, *Cappadocia: Le città sotterranee* (Rome: Istituto poligrafico e Zecca dello Stato, Libreria dello Stato, 2002), 110–113, 182–187, 209–278, 293–307.

bles – something virtually inconceivable in a political order in which control of the military and military installations was vested in the centre.²³

An intelligence report on Byzantium, which was incorporated by Ibn Khurradādhbih (d. ca. 298/911), head of the *barīd*, the caliphal post and intelligence system, into the first edition of his *Treatise of Highways and Kingdoms* (datable ca. 847), recorded the number of fortresses which existed by that date in each of the military provinces into which Asia Minor was divided.²⁴ A century and a half later, another Muslim geographer, author of the Persian *Hudūd al-Ālām* ('Regions of the World'), characterized Asia Minor as a land studded with fortresses and with few cities. The city being regarded as a mark of full development, Byzantium could be dismissed as a backward, relatively impoverished neighbor of the caliphate, its military successes in the tenth century being attributed to Muslim divisions rather than its own strength. These Muslim observers were probably thinking in the first instance of the interior of Asia Minor, relatively denuded as it was of cities proper, cities which could measure up to those of the Muslim world, including the north-Syrian and Cilician borderlands.²⁵

But the authorities in dark age Byzantium had not sought to freeze the late antique pattern of settlement, organized in terms of cities and city territories. They had adapted to circumstance, developing an elasticity in settlement pattern, something akin to seasonal transhumance, driven by military threat rather than the search for high pastures. As has been noted, the army was expected to shepherd the villagers in threatened localities to safety. Safety could take the form of underground shelters or the interior of one of the cities selected as strategically vital and endowed therefore with powerful defenses. The principal secure refuges, though, were the *strongholds* (Gr. *ochyrrōmata*). These were well-defined highland areas which were transformed, by

²³ Mark Whittow, "Rural Fortifications in Western Europe and Byzantium, Tenth to Twelfth Century," in *Bosphorus: Essays in Honour of Cyril Mango*, eds. Stefanos Efthymiadis, Claudia Rapp and Dimitris Tsougarakis, *Byzantinische Forschungen* 21 (Amsterdam: Adolf M. Hakkert, 1995), 57–74.

²⁴ Ibn Khurradādhbih, *Kitāb al-masālik wa'l-mamālik*, trans. M.J. de Goeje, *Bibliotheca Geographorum Arabicorum* 6 (Leiden: Brill, 1889), 77–80; James Montgomery, "Serendipity, Resistance and Multivalency: Ibn Khurradādhbih and his *Kitāb al-Masālik wa-l-mamālik*," in *On Fiction and Adab in Medieval Arabic Literature*, ed. Philip Kennedy (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2005), 183–187, 198–209.

²⁵ Vladimir V. Minorsky, ed., *Hudūd al-Ālām: "The Regions of the World": A Persian Geography*, 372 A.H.–982 A.D. (London: Luzac, 1937), 157; Ibn Ḥawqal, *Configuration de la terre (Kitāb Sūrat al-ard)*, trans. J.H. Kramers and G. Wiet (Beirut: Commission internationale pour la traduction des chefs-d'œuvre, 1964), 1:194–195.

judiciously placed fortresses, into virtually impenetrable redoubts.²⁶ Man was exploiting God's handiwork, both sheltered valleys in the peripheral mountains (especially in Pisidia and Paphlagonia) which were conveniently close to exposed villages, and those islands of close-packed hills which protrude here and there from the undulating surface of the plateau in Cappadocia, Lycaonia, Phrygia and Galatia.²⁷

The fortresses which were built in the early middle ages were smaller than their Roman and late Roman precursors. They occupied natural strongpoints, from which they could watch over the principal routes entering and traversing Asia Minor and over access points into *strongholds*.²⁸ Their principal functions were (1) to monitor enemy movements, (2) to deter an invasion force from dispersing into numerous small raiding forays, and (3) to protect the civilian population and livestock in the *strongholds* to which they had been evacuated. Some were little more than crag-castles (like those guarding the Melendiz Dağ in south-west Cappadocia or the Emirdağ in Phrygia), but there were other substantial fortresses, rather easier of access (like that built on the site of the small city of Euchaita).²⁹ The prime task of all the garrisons stationed in or near *strongholds*, and of the mobile field forces shadowing enemy invaders,

²⁶ Nicephorus Phocas, *De velitatione*, 2.1, 8.1, 11.1–5, 12.1–6, 13.1–5, 17.4, 18.4, 20.11, 22.1. Successful use of such a highland redoubt by the population of Euchaita is noted in the course of an account of a miracle of St. Theodore Tiro: Hippolyte Delehaye, *Les légendes grecques des saints militaires* (Paris: A. Picard, 1909), 197.27–29, 198.27–31.

²⁷ Friedrich Hild and Marcell Restle, *Kappadokien* (*Kappadokia, Charsianon, Sebasteia und Lykandos*), *Tabula Imperii Byzantini* 2 (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1981), 128–132, 135–137, 142, 147–148, 159, 178–182, 216–217, 219–221, 223–224, 241–242, 245–246, 266–267, 276–278, 305; Klaus Belke and Marcell Restle, *Galatien und Lykaonien*, *Tabula Imperii Byzantini* 4 (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1984), 111–114, 132–133, 145–148, 172–173, 182–183, 186–187, 204, 232–234, 245; Klaus Belke and Norbert Mersich, *Phrygien und Pisidien*, *Tabula Imperii Byzantini* 7 (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1990), 161–165, 193, 203–204, 215–216, 289–290, 295–297, 306–308, 349–350, 368–369, 371–372, 391, 399–400, 402, 420–421; James Crow, "Byzantine Castles or Fortified Places in Paphlagonia and Pontus," in *Archaeology of the Countryside*, eds. Tasha Vorderstrasse and Jacob Roodenberg, (Leiden: Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten, 2009), 25–43.

²⁸ Cf. Leslie Brubaker and John Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era c. 680–850: A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 554–558.

²⁹ Melendiz Dağ, together with adjoining Hasan Dağ: Berger, "Viranşehir," 368–371; Robert Ousterhout, *A Byzantine Settlement in Cappadocia*, Dumbarton Oaks Studies 42 (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2005), 8–9, 125–126, 172–173, 182–183; Hild and Restle, *Kappadokien*, 135–137, 216–217, 277–278. Emirdağ: Belke and Mersich, *Phrygien und Pisidien*, 306–308, 349–350, 402. Euchaita website: www.princeton.edu/avkat/the_project/.

was to bar entry to the enemy. *Strongholds* were evacuation areas, the security of which was guaranteed by the state. The normal rules of engagement, which required defending forces to avoid combat unless victory was assured (because of terrain, numbers, or surprise), were cast aside when it came to the defense of a *stronghold*. Military commanders were given orders to stand and fight for their fellow-citizens who had taken refuge with them, whatever the tactical circumstances.³⁰

It was in the decades of regular Muslim attack in the long raiding season (from early spring to late autumn) that the authority of the imperial government was most deeply impressed on whole swathes of the interior of Asia Minor. The role of higher, remote authority in the defense of the main outpost of Christendom in the Middle East was signaled above all by fortresses, most of them flaunting their presence in inaccessible spots and seeking to depress the morale of Muslim raiding forces as they passed below. But it is the *stronghold*, with its ring of fortresses, which may be taken as the chief symbol of an effective state, geared for war against an ideologically charged and more powerful adversary.

2 Social Status and Control: Village Leaders, Landowners and Urban Notables

War and government action reshaped the settlement pattern in the interior of Asia Minor in the seventh–ninth centuries. In place of a set of cities and city territories, unevenly distributed across relatively extensive provinces, linked by all-weather roads and managed by provincial authorities, civilian for the most part, under the ultimate financial control of the Praetorian Prefect of the East, there appeared a landscape (1) of villages, clustering in pools of fertile land, (2) of artificially strengthened highland redoubts which doubled as zones of refuge and secure bases for local field forces, (3) of fortresses and (4) of a few widely-spaced, heavily fortified cities. The whole peninsula was divided up between a small number of large regional military commands. More will be said about the ways in which central authority impinged on the localities and about the new balance achieved between civilian and military post-holders in part III below. Beforehand, though, we should turn to examine what can be learned of social relations in the Anatolian countryside.

³⁰ Nicephorus Phocas, *De velitatione*, c. 20.9–11.

One question above all others demands an answer: what was the fate of the urban notables who constituted the moving force in provincial society in antiquity, when, in the course of the seventh and early eighth centuries, their cities dwindled away or were converted into heavily defended military and administrative centres? It is likely to have varied between the greatest families, on the one hand, those with transprovincial connections and widely distributed landholdings, and more modest members of urban elites, on the other, who may have been involved in trade but were primarily rentiers, with suburban villas and a small portfolio of estates confined to their city's territory. In aggregate the notables, great and small, constituted the provincial elite, the upper echelons of which were integrated into the imperial administrative apparatus and could act as intermediaries and negotiators between the center and the localities. The key issue concerns elite status and its social and economic roots in an era of dramatic change. Landed wealth, connections, social and political, both within and beyond the city, and a decent education were the three principal contributors to status in late antiquity, in what was a relatively stable, law-regulated system. What was the impact of war and all the disruption and damage brought about by war on this social order?³¹

First, though, we should look at village society. For the village was the fundamental constituent of the Byzantine state.³² As the basic unit of taxation, the village underpinned the whole fiscal system. As the nucleated settlement which nurtured most of the manpower of the state, it was to the village that the army looked in the first instance for recruits. What then was the effect of war, apparently unending war, on the village social order? Apart from the much debated question of the social and legal status of the peasantry, whether it rose or fell in the seventh and eighth centuries, whether rights were gained or lost, in particular property rights, what can be learned of the internal structure of the village? Were elites generated within village society? If so, how did they maintain their status? Were they able to do so from generation to generation?

³¹ A.H.M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire, 284–602: A Social, Economic and Administrative Survey* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964), 2:523–562, 712–766; Peter Heather, “New Men for New Constantines? Creating an Imperial Elite in the Eastern Mediterranean,” in *New Constantines: The Rhythm of Imperial Renewal in Byzantium, fourth–thirteenth Centuries*, ed. Paul Magdalino (Aldershot: Variorum, 1994), 11–33; Liebeschuetz, *Decline and Fall*, 104–124, 213–218, 223–231, 400–416; Peter Sarris, *Economy and Society in the Age of Justinian* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 177–199.

³² Michel Kaplan, *Les hommes et la terre à Byzance du vie au xi^e siècle: propriété et exploitation du sol*, *Byzantina Sorbonensis* 10 (Paris: Université de Paris, 1992), 89–134; Chris Wickham, *Framing the Early Middle Ages: Europe and the Mediterranean 400–800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 443–465.

How responsive were they to the outside world? Were they ready to do the bidding of local officials? Or were they tribunes of small societies, which were to a large extent insulated from the concerns of the local, regional and imperial authorities?

It is easier to ask than to answer such questions. For there is a striking dearth of source material about the interior of Asia Minor in the seventh–ninth centuries, and, in particular, a complete absence of archival documents. A general picture can be drawn, as has been done in section 1, based, in the first place, on archaeological evidence, limited for the most part to surveyed surface remains (walls, foundations of walls, sherd scatters) but deepened at a few sites by excavation, and, in the second, on the long narrative poem about Digenes Akrites, a hybrid epic and romance, which conjured up a lost heroic past for early twelfth-century Byzantine readers.³³ Rather more important are three contemporary and near-contemporary governmental sources, which give the view of higher authority. This documentary material comprises (1) information which Ibn Khurradādhbih picked up from the contemporary who knew most about Byzantium, a certain al-Djarmī, a senior official in the Arab marches, who spent some time in captivity before being released in a formal exchange of prisoners in early autumn 845,³⁴ (2) the *Farmer's Law* (*Nomos Georgikos*), which predates the ninth-century refurbishing of Roman Law in Greek and should probably be regarded as an adjunct to the *Ecloga*, a short, accessible Greek code issued by Leo III in 741,³⁵ and (3) the imperially sponsored handbook on *Guerrilla*

33 Elizabeth Jeffreys, ed. and trans., *Digenis Akritis*, Cambridge Medieval Classics 7 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Paul Magdalino, "Digenes Akrites and Byzantine Literature: The Twelfth-Century Background to the Grottaferrata Version," in *Digenes Akrites: New Approaches to Byzantine Heroic Poetry*, eds. Roderick Beaton and David Ricks (Aldershot: Variorum, 1993), 1–14; Roderick Beaton, "Cappadocians at Court: Digenes and Timarion," in *Alexios I Komnenos*, eds. Margaret Mullett and Dion Smythe (Belfast: Belfast Byzantine Enterprises, 1996), 329–338.

34 The only information about al-Djarmī is provided by Mas'sūdī (trans. Alexander Vasiliev, *Byzance et les Arabes*, vol. 1, *La dynastie d'Amorium* (820–867), eds. Henri Grégoire and Marius Canard (Brussels: Institut de Philologie et d'Histoire Orientales, 1935), 336). Cf. Warren Treadgold, "Remarks on the Work of Al-Jarmī on Byzantium," *Byzantinoslavica* 44 (1983): 205–212. Al-Djarmī's coverage is fullest on the military provinces (*themes*) lying on or near the main diagonal route across Asia Minor along which al-Djarmī was probably taken (an observation of Nicole Mangion's in her 2008 Oxford Masters dissertation on Ibn Khurradādbih, 14–16).

35 Igor Medvedev, ed. and trans., *Vizantijskij zemledel'cheskij zakon* (Leningrad: Nauka, 1984), cited henceforth as *Nom.Georg.*; James Howard-Johnston, "Social Change in Early Medieval Byzantium," in *Lordship and Learning: Studies in Memory of Trevor Aston*, ed. Ralph Evans (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2004), 39–50, 43–44, 46–49; Michael Humphreys, *Law, Power and Imperial Ideology in the Iconoclast Era c. 680–850* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 195–232.

Warfare, cited above (n. 8) which was written in the 960s when the tactics developed in previous centuries were falling into disuse. This last gives the best insight into the overall structure of the plateau region, since the guerrilla strategy of defense had to be tailored to the particularities, geographical, social and economic, of the principal arena of combat. It was written for the benefit of future readers, who would not have had direct experience of the techniques devised and applied in the recent past. It is therefore an invaluable source for the historian of Byzantium's long dark age, both in terms of what it says and what it implies.

In addition to these sources – of which the *Farmer's Law* and the archaeology of declining urban sites are the most important – saints' lives can yield useful information. For biographies of Byzantine saints (and accounts of posthumous miracles) remained remarkably attentive to realities, both in recounting individual lives and in describing settings. There is less resort to biblical cliché and less stereotyping of character than in much western medieval hagiography. Hagiography was the one form of Byzantine historical writing to weather the Muslim storm relatively unscathed.³⁶ One set of miracles stories and half a dozen lives cast light on localities in different regions of inner Asia Minor over the course of the seventh–ninth centuries.

Inner Asia Minor may be defined as the plateau region together with an immediately adjoining strip of mountainous terrain, which looked to the plateau and to which the villages of the plateau looked for safety in local *strongholds*. The miracles of one of the great military saints, Theodore the Recruit, whose cult centered on the fortified kernel of the small city of Euchaita in southern Paphlagonia, provides local corroboration for the role of *strongholds* in Byzantine defence.³⁷ Of the lives, the longest and richest, in the quantity of particulars retailed about town and village life in Galatia at the beginning of the seventh century, is that of Theodore of Syceon (d. 613). It provides unique insight into the internal stresses of village life at a time of growing crisis.³⁸ Next in importance comes a masterpiece of early medieval literature which is set in the late eighth century. It is the delightful tale of Philaretus of Amnia in

³⁶ James Howard-Johnston and Paul Hayward, eds., *The Cult of Saints in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages: Essays on the Contribution of Peter Brown* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 5–7, 14–23.

³⁷ Hippolyte Delehaye, *Légendes grecques des saints militaires* (Paris: A. Picard, 1909), 198–201; Euchaita website (no. 29 above).

³⁸ André-Jean Festugière, ed. and trans., *Vie de Théodore de Sykéon*, Subsidia hagiographica 48 (Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1970), cited as V.Theod.; cf. Stephen Mitchell, *Anatolia: Land, Men, and Gods in Asia Minor*, vol. 2, *The Rise of the Church* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 122–150.

Paphlagonia (d. 792), a man who took the giving of alms to an extreme and who, much to the distress of his wife, reduced his family to penury. It is an artfully constructed biography, Philaretus being cast as a latter-day Job who wins the favor of God (made manifest in the choice of his granddaughter as bride for the young Emperor Constantine VI in 788) because of his blithe unconcern for material things. Much has been improved in the writing – the scale of his wealth, the extent of his impoverishment – but the presuppositions of the text, the sort of local society envisaged, the ways in which authority impinged on the life of a countryman, have assuredly been taken from life.³⁹

Five other lives may also be brought into the frame, although the saints grew up and spent most of their lives outside inner Asia Minor – because of the vignettes of rural life which they present. Three date from the ninth century and refer to Bithynia. They are the lives of Theophanes (abbot and historian), Peter of Atroa, and Ioannicius, the last of whom made one journey across the interior of Asia Minor.⁴⁰ Two date from the tenth. Michael Maleinus belonged to a great magnate family from Charsianon, in the north-east plateau, but pursued his monastic vocation well away from home in the north-west. Finally there is Paul, who grew up in Bithynia and sank into poverty before being rescued by his brother and taken off to Mt. Olympus, one of several holy mountains which came to prominence in the age of war and disruption. Later, after he had moved to another mountain, Latrus, his fame grew and he became the spiritual patron and miracle-worker for villagers in the environs of Miletus.⁴¹ It is reasonably safe to extrapolate from what these five lives say about the social order of the village in the north-west and the west, to that of the plateau region and its fringing hills. For all the differences which can be documented – the absence of olives from the interior and the bias towards stock-raising – there was a basic structural similarity. When the old order in the countryside came under threat

39 Lennart Rydén, ed. and trans., *The Life of St. Philaretos the Merciful Written by his Grandson Niketas*, Studia Byzantina Upsaliensia 8 (Uppsala: Uppsala University Library, 2002), cited as *V.Phil.*

40 V.V. Latyshev, ed., *Methodius patriarches Constantinopolitanus, Vita s. Theophanis Confessoris*, Mémoires de l'Académie des Sciences de Russie, Cl. hist.-phil., ser. 8, 13.4 (St. Petersburg: Ross. Akad. Nauk, 1918), 1–40, cited as *V.Theoph.*; Vitalien Laurent, ed. and trans., *La vie merveilleuse de saint Pierre d'Atroa* (†837), Subsidia hagiographica 29 (Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1956), cited as *V.Petr.*; lives of Ioannicius by Sabas and by Peter, *Acta Sanctorum, Nov.*, 11.1 (1894), 332–383 (Sabas), 383–435 (Peter), cited as *V.Ioann. (s)* and *V.Ioann. (P)*.

41 Louis Petit, "Vie et office de saint Michel Maléinos, suivis d'un traité ascétique de Basile Maléinos," *Revue de l'Orient chrétien* 7 (1902): 549–603, cited as *V.Mich.*; Hippolyte Delehaye, "Vita S. Pauli iunioris in monte Latro," *Analecta Bollandia* 11 (1892): 5–74, 136–182, cited as *V.Paul*.

in the course of the tenth and eleventh centuries, the legislation issued to protect peasant villagers did not differentiate between different Anatolian regions.

It should cause no surprise that the seventh- and eighth-century era of war, especially the early phases when Arab armies ranged far and wide over Anatolia, saw a marked shift in the balance of power on the land. Given that it was also a period of unremitting demographic decline, landowners found it increasingly hard to keep hold of their tenantry (*coloni*) – especially as most probably tried to do so from a distance, from the places where they had sought safety. It was not as if there was any shortage of land to cultivate in Anatolia, where it had always been control of labor, not ownership of land, which was the key to wealth. The economic power of labor was immeasurably increased with its growing scarcity in the seventh century. There was also the far from negligible additional factor that villagers were being recruited in large numbers to form the army's infantry core.⁴² Equipped with weapons and trained to fight, the peasantry undoubtedly became less amenable to social pressure, more independent-minded, readier to carve out smallholdings of their own than to continue to serve distant rentier landowners. The scale of the social transformation which occurred is made plain in the changing meaning of a key term, *georgos*, the official Greek equivalent of the Latin *colonus* in the sixth century. In the *Farmer's Law*, the *georgos* is a freeholder, owner of various parcels of land (arable, vineyard, garden) identified by boundary markers, over which he can strike deals with his fellow-villagers.⁴³ The imperial government responded to changing circumstances. The peasant proprietor was portrayed as a key member of the body politic. His welfare became a matter of political significance. The minimizing of friction and faction within villages was an avowed concern of the Isaurian dynasty, if, as seems likely, it was responsible, in the middle or second half of the eighth century, for disseminating the *Farmer's Law*. For it was a rural code primarily concerned with the relations of villager to village, *qua* owners of property, both fixed and movable, animate and inanimate. It looks like a subtle exercise of authority, designed, *inter alia*, gradually to change traditional attitudes of townsmen and of the administrative classes towards the countryman, the laborer in the fields, the shepherd and the herdsman.⁴⁴

⁴² See p. 155 below.

⁴³ *Nom. Georg.*, cc. 1–5, 11–16, 50–51, 57–58.

⁴⁴ Cf. Mark Whittow, "Early Medieval Byzantium and the End of the Ancient World," *Journal of Agrarian Change* 9 (2009): 134–153, 147–148; Humphreys, *Law, Power and Imperial Ideology*, 203–218.

Apart from war, the damage and disruption caused by war, and population decline, there were two main influences on this new peasant social order. First, settlement was strongly nucleated, although probably not to quite the same extent in the highlands as on the coastal plains and plateau. The rural population was concentrated in villages rather than dispersed over the landscape in small hamlets and farmsteads. Agriculture and stock-raising were articulated around compact clusters of houses, with the most valuable and intensively exploited land (given over mainly to vegetables and orchard trees) concentrated in an inner belt around the village, and the grazing stretching out beyond the main outer belt of cultivated fields.⁴⁵ Second, there was the law, Roman Law. This prescribed a partitive system of inheritance, which probably went with the grain of the peasant family. Sons and daughters had rights to shares of their parents' property (ideally equal shares). Each share, of course, had to contain equal proportions of each type of land – garden, orchard and field. The size of the share varied inversely with the number of children. In an era of stable population, the size of each of the plots constituting a share would tend to remain the same as the incorporation of dowries countered the division of estates, and large families were counterbalanced by small ones. If the demographic trend were downward, as it was, almost certainly, at the onset of the dark age, individual holdings would tend to increase in size but not to the extent of forming consolidated small farms. Whatever the trend, downward or upward (leading to greater fragmentation), the pattern of landholding altered from generation to generation, through the normal processes of death, inheritance, birth and marriage. The village territory, viewed as an aggregate of individual properties, was, in effect, an ever-changing mosaic of intermingled private cultivated plots.⁴⁶

This intermingling of plots had a fundamental influence on village society. If a cultivator was to reach a field or cultivate a garden, if his animals were to move out from the village center to a field or to common pasture, he had to thread his way past or through others' land. The potential causes of dissension were legion – damage to vines or crops, injury to animals, not to mention accidents involving agricultural implements or bonfires ...⁴⁷ The relations of neighbor to neighbor had to be firmly regulated by convention, if families were to subsist, if agriculture and pastoral activities were to continue. A striking example of the role of convention concerns fruit: there was a fine, but clearly recognized, line

⁴⁵ Kaplan, *Les hommes et la terre*, 111–134.

⁴⁶ Angeliki Laiou, "Family Structure and the Transmission of Property," in *A Social History of Byzantium*, ed. John Haldon (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 51–75.

⁴⁷ *Nom.Georg.*, cc. 1, 38–40, 48–54, 56, 78–79, 85.

between the licit picking and eating of fruit by a passerby and the criminal act of theft.⁴⁸ The *Farmer's Law*, which codified convention and sought to generalize good practice, opens a window on to the internal functioning of the village and reveals the solidarity required from its inhabitants. Without respect for the needs and wishes of others, without a sense of membership of a small society with shared interests, individuals and families would not co-exist peaceably over the generations. Without such collective solidarity, disputes would have been hard to manage and defuse. It follows that the fiscal solidarity at the level of the village which formed the base of the whole Byzantine tax system was simply a reflection of social reality. It was not something imposed by the state from above, nor was it confined to country where villagers had to band together to tap meager water resources, or to manage the slow shifting of rivers' courses in alluvial plains. No, the village was a tight-knit small society, framed as such by family law and economic necessity. It had to cohere to function, but its cohesion imparted great resilience in the face of pressures from without.⁴⁹

Social cohesion did not entail parity either in wealth or in status. Significant variations are envisaged in the *Farmer's Law*, ranging from the owner of a large holding (the *chorodotes*, who may or may not have belonged to the village community) and the better-off proprietor who might lease land from a poor peasant, down to wage-laborers and slaves.⁵⁰ Nothing is said about a village leadership, because of the narrow scope of the text (not concerned with social structure, or non-agricultural activity [no mention of blacksmiths, priests or soldiers]). It did undoubtedly exist, given disparities in wealth (clearly noted in the Life of Peter of Atroa)⁵¹ and the need for the village to act as a body in its dealings with the outer world, neighboring villages and above all the local authorities.

The best evidence comes from the Life of Theodore of Syceon, before the era of social change, when the word *georgos* had not yet altered its meaning, when large estates, ecclesiastical and secular, still relied on dependent tenantry.⁵² On several occasions, village leaders called on Theodore of Syceon to intervene and calm crises in their relations with their fellow-villagers. The distinction which is drawn is both social and economic. The leading villagers (*ktetores*, *protoi*, *prooikoi*) are also designated landlords (*oikodespotai*, literally 'houselords'),

⁴⁸ *Nom. Georg.*, c. 61.

⁴⁹ Cf. Paul Lemerle, *The Agrarian History of Byzantium from the Origins to the Twelfth Century: The Sources and Problems* (Galway: Galway University Press, 1979), 35–47.

⁵⁰ *Nom. Georg.*, cc. 9–10, 12–15, 34, 45–47, 71–72.

⁵¹ *V.Petr.*, cc. 24, 76.

⁵² *V.Theod.*, cc. 76.2, 5, 148.1, 151.5.

which suggests that some, possibly many, of their fellow-villagers were their tenants.⁵³ Only in two cases, however, are villagers formally identified as *georgoi*.⁵⁴

There may have been an underlying economic cause of these village troubles, but the main catalyst was a general sense of crisis, an awareness that the war currently being fought against the Persians (from 603) was not going well and that the fighting was coming steadily nearer.⁵⁵ What is significant for the historian of rural society is the form taken by each of the crises confronted by Theodore. A small group of village rich and powerful was targeted by a much larger group. The exercise of their customary authority, without regard to their fellow-villagers, was challenged. Behavior probably long regarded as acceptable or at least tolerated was resented and opposed. A traditional balance of power, between those with status and those without, was disturbed.⁵⁶ Theodore's role was that of conservator of the old order, restorer of the customary balance between groups, buttress of elites – in town as well as country. It was the notables of cities – Ancyra, Heraclea, Anastasiopolis, Pessinus, Amorium, Germia – with whom he dealt, and for whom, in one case, that of Germia, he had to invest all his spiritual authority in a ceremony of mass exorcism to restore good order.⁵⁷

There is no evidence about the fortunes of such village elites over the next few generations. It may be conjectured, though, that without the protection of a charismatic holy man and in an era of increasing disruption and economic strain, as the arena of war came to embrace the whole of Asia Minor, traditional village leaders had to cede ground to their fellow-villagers, that status could no longer be transmitted within privileged families but had to be earned by individuals, through their own efforts and achievements, that it moved around according to the circulation of wealth and reputation among individuals and their kin. Local leadership was, of course, still needed, for all the changes in the wider world (de-urbanization and militarization), both to regulate internal

⁵³ VTheod., cc. 67.1–2 (*ktetores*), 115.2–3, 8, 117.30, 143.13 (*protoi*), 124.1, 4, 143.13 (*prooikoi*), 98.1, 114.1, 115.42, 116.38, 118.5, 141.16 (*oikodespotai*). Cf. Mitchell, *Anatolia*, 2:133–134, who, however, views these village leaders as representative of a resilient free peasantry.

⁵⁴ VTheod., cc. 56.9, 116.2.

⁵⁵ Cf. Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses to a World Crisis*, 149–151, 436–439.

⁵⁶ VTheod., cc. 43, 114–118. Cf. Mitchell, *Anatolia*, 2:139–140.

⁵⁷ Apart from a general designation as *ktetores* or *proteuontes*, the urban notables may also be referred to by title or local honorific (*illustris*, *protector*, *domesticus*, *eleutheros*): VTheod., cc. 25.6, 45.3, 5, 162.82 (Ancyra), 44.2 (Heraclea), 58.3, 10, 76.2, 169.42 (Anastasiopolis), 101.5–6 (Pessinus), 107.7, 22, 32 (Amorium), 161.163–164, 170, 176 (Germia). Cf. Mitchell, *Anatolia*, 2:127, 140–141.

disputes (brought before one or more *akroatai*, ‘auditors’),⁵⁸ and to negotiate with outside bodies, as, for example, when an official party was seeking lodging in rural Paphlagonia at the end of the eighth century and lit upon the large house of the impoverished Philaretus. It was the *protoi* who came to the rescue, supplying food for the banquet laid on in his fine hall.⁵⁹ These village leaders doubtless had successors in the later ninth and tenth centuries, ready like them to act on behalf of their communities, perhaps serving on deputations to local authorities or seeking help from a holy man or initiating actions in the courts. In aggregate, they formed an important constituency, of which the imperial government was well advised to take note.⁶⁰

There can be little doubt about the demise of city notables.⁶¹ With the contraction and impoverishment of the small minority of cities selected for preservation as hard-point bases for the army and administration, and the dwindling of the majority into vestigial settlements, which might migrate to more secluded sites, the wealth and status of urban notables plummeted. The driving force behind this decline was as much the Byzantine state as war. For Byzantium retained the governmental capabilities of the east Roman empire, in particular its fiscal reach. The inherited tax system enabled the center to tap the resources of the localities to a greater and greater extent as the crisis deepened in the middle decades of the seventh century. It was therefore the same strong state as enabled Byzantium to co-ordinate and direct the long battle for survival that hoovered up all available material and human resources for the war effort. So it was that the cities, the organizing centers for the taxation and administration of their territories in late antiquity, were gradually drained of their vital forces in the first century or so of war against Islam.⁶²

The only possible analogues in the Byzantine dark age to the city notables attested in the Life of Theodore of Sycone were members of the local apparatus of government. They continued to operate from such largish settlements as had been selected for special fortification. The seals which secured and authenticated letters (and bonded goods) show this in the case of fiscal officials.⁶³ It

⁵⁸ *Nom. Georg.*, cc. 37, 67.

⁵⁹ *VPhil.*, lines 385–424.

⁶⁰ Kaplan, *Hommes et la terre*, 198–202, 223–227.

⁶¹ Notwithstanding the signs of hesitation in Whittow, “Early Medieval Byzantium,” 140–147.

⁶² This explanation for the deep decline of towns in Byzantium, in marked contrast to their flourishing in the neighbouring Islamic world, I owe to tutorial discussion with Peter Sarris, many years ago.

⁶³ Wolfram Brandes, *Finanzverwaltung in Krisenzeiten: Untersuchungen zur byzantinischen*

is virtually certain that other civilian post holders and commanders of local forces together with their staffs continued to reside in the residual cities. But they cannot be construed to form an independent, locally rooted, urban elite, ready and able to stand up for local interests and to act as a counterweight to the center. They were the center's local minions, accountable either to the heads of the relevant department in Constantinople or, in military emergencies, to the local military high command.

What then had happened to the rentiers, great and small, who presided over city affairs at the end of antiquity and monitored the performance of imperial officials and commanders?

The majority were probably sucked out and down into the rural population, with neither the resources nor the connections fostered by close proximity in a city to maintain superior status. Resources took the form of land, but land was virtually worthless without the labor to cultivate it. It was the inevitable weakening of the notables' grip over their tenants and wage laborers, brought about by their dispersal in the hinterlands of cities, in an era of declining population, that reduced their property to a fraction of its former extent, ultimately perhaps to a single landholding which the family itself could cultivate. Their absorption into the upper echelons of the peasantry within two or three generations was almost foreordained. Of the minority, some surely looked to army careers to maintain something of their former status, while others, with more connections and greater disposable wealth, could migrate from the zone of war, to safer and larger cities in the Aegean coastlands and Bithynia, from which they could move on to Constantinople. Their ultimate recourse, if they were to maintain something of their old position, was to look to imperial service and to preferment in it for a good income and the re-accumulation of wealth.⁶⁴

Even the greatest aristocratic families, those which were able to challenge the ruling dynasty for supreme power in the tenth and eleventh centuries, did not claim pedigrees reaching back into late antiquity. The Byzantine aristocracy in Asia Minor, the origins of which can be traced back to the first half of the eighth century, thus seems to have made little effort to root itself in the Roman past.⁶⁵ It is likely, then, that whatever the fate of individual components of

Administration im 6.–9. Jahrhundert (Frankfurt: Löwenklau, 2002), 214–216 (*dioiketai*), 386–388, 601–610 (*basilika kommerchia* after 730/1).

64 Cf. John Haldon, "The Fate of the Late Roman Senatorial Elite: Extinction or Transformation?" in *Elites Old and New in the Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East*, eds. John Haldon and Lawrence Conrad, The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East 6 (Princeton: Darwin Press, 2004), 198–234.

65 Cf. Jean-Claude Cheynet, "L'aristocratie byzantine (VIII^e–XII^e siècle)," *Journal des Sa-*

the governing elite at the center and in the provinces in the changed circumstances of war and never-ending crisis, there was a thorough reformation of the inherited social order. In the new world of a small, centralized sub-empire, a new elite took shape both within the officer corps and the civilian apparatus of government, a *service aristocracy*, dependent on the crown for posts and emoluments. Individuals might have expectations of command or office, of which the crown had to take note in many cases, since it would have been the height of folly to ignore them and thereby antagonize a significant subset of its own agents, but ultimately they were the creatures of government.⁶⁶

But the role of land (together with the labor needed to cultivate it) as a buttress of social power was not disregarded. There is evidence, before the end of the eighth century, of the rooting of elements of the service aristocracy, and especially of senior army officers, in the country. This did not simply take the form of the acquisition of landholdings to supply an income independent of government. There was an innovation in the pattern of aristocratic life which marked off the aristocracy of Byzantium from its late Roman predecessor in the eastern empire. The city was superseded by the *country house* as its place of residence. Rural life was embraced by the holders of power in the localities in the early middle ages. This was quite without precedent. For the villas which studded the landscape of the western empire in antiquity had had few, if any, analogues, in the eastern provinces, including Asia Minor.⁶⁷ The villa there had been confined to the suburbs of cities, the setting being one of gardens and orchards rather than a large estate. Further afield there had been estate centers for managing larger landholdings and a few small private rural resorts, pavilions for picnic parties and hunting lodges – but no well-laid-out, elegantly decorated houses, with appropriate amenities and receptions rooms, where a family might have lived for much of the year.

The medieval Byzantine country house marked a radical departure from the Roman villa of antiquity, in terms of its facilities. There is no record of bath-houses on the ancient pattern, with hot and cold rooms, and underfloor heating. Instead most aristocratic houses, greater and lesser, included chapels. More space was reserved for kitchens and stables. The staff might include a specialist silversmith or jeweler, where, in the past, the family would have looked to craftsmen in a nearby city. The main public room was the hall. The whole

vants, no. 2 (2000): 281–298. Whittow, “Early Medieval Byzantium,” 144–145 is inclined to discount this argument from silence.

⁶⁶ However, we should not go as far as Edward Gibbon, *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, ed. J.B. Bury (London: Methuen, 1896–1900), 6:79–86.

⁶⁷ Wickham, *Framing the Middle Ages*, 465–473.

complex was laid out around a courtyard. It was in a country house in Bithynia that Theophanes spent much of his childhood in the middle of the eighth century, hunting looming rather larger in his upbringing than it would have done two centuries earlier. A decade or two later, Philaretus' extended family of wife, children and grandchildren lived in a fine house which caught the eye of passing travelers. It was a dwelling appropriate for a local grandee. The hall had a round ivory and gold inlaid table capable of seating thirty-six. Here as elsewhere in his *Life*, a fair amount of embellishment may be detected, but there can be no doubting the importance of the grand country house in the life of localities.⁶⁸

None, alas, of the freestanding masonry structures have survived, their building material having been recycled in later centuries. There is no trace of even the grandest of country palaces, those belonging to magnate families of military origin such as the Phocades, Maleini, Argyri, Diogenae and Comneni, which displayed their owners' wealth and power to the people of the localities and to passing travelers. We only know that they were built close to main roads – so they may perhaps be conjured up in the mind as Byzantine antecedents of the grand caravanserais built by the Seljuk Turks.⁶⁹ But some houses, carved out of the soft tufa of Cappadocia, dating from the tenth and eleventh centuries, have survived. They varied in size and grandeur. Some clustered together, like the grand houses with large stables at Açıksaray (not far from the river Halys) or the run-of-the-mill courtyard houses, belonging probably to middle-ranking officials, on the flank of a low hill at Çanlı Kilise (south-west Cappadocia, not far from the Hasan Dağ). Others, belonging presumably to the principal local landowners, dominated their villages to a greater or lesser extent. If the village consisted of more than a set of closely-packed rock-cut hovels (as seems to have been the case at Erdemli, in a small valley off the Caesarea plain), other, smaller courtyard houses may have belonged to senior figures in the landowner's household or to villagers who were making good. Although these rock-cut complexes are all more modest than the magnate palaces visualized above and that described in the *Digenes Akrites*, they have the same components – kitchens with raised, pyramidal ceilings, chapels, and centrally placed halls, arranged around a rectangular courtyard, fronted by a carved façade, with stables to the side.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Robert Ousterhout, *Visualizing Community: Art, Material Culture, and Settlement in Cappadocia* (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 2017), 351–363; *VTheoph.*, c. 6; *VPhil.*, lines 385–389, 415–420.

⁶⁹ Jeffreys, *Digenes Akritis*, 82–83. Cf. James Howard-Johnston, "Pouvoir et contestation à Byzance," *Europe* 822 (1997): 68–70.

⁷⁰ Jeffreys, *Digenes Akritis*, 202–209; Lyn Rodley, *Cave Monasteries of Byzantine Cappadocia*

Military men loomed large in this new world of rural landowners. The most successful could bring great prestige as well as wealth to bear upon the districts where they settled. Their appearance, like that of civilian office-holders and ex-office-holders, had important consequences for social relations in the localities. It is true that these new elites were no longer bonded together by residence in a single urban center, but they still developed connections with each other in the course of their varied careers, as they served in different places with different colleagues. In time the nexus of such connections between individual members of the officer corps and governing apparatus would give them great collective power. They would be lumped together as the *dynatoi*, the 'powerful', who were able to exercise influence in their localities through their contacts, not least those with local officialdom in their home provinces.⁷¹

From the point of view of their neighbors, the houses of the 'powerful' formed a second pole of attraction beside the village. Country people could not but be impressed by their houses, their clothing, their benefactions to local churches and monasteries, and their whole way of life. They were, we know, able to recruit household staff, estate managers and other retainers, who would escort them and attend to their needs when they travelled.⁷² Yet more important, they were able to gather and retain the labor required to cultivate their fields and watch over their herds and flocks. The move of the elite from town to country thus led directly to an increase in the influence of individual aristocratic families in the localities and in the degree of social control which they could exercise there. In the longer-term, it resulted in the development of aristocratic clientages, into which whole village communities might be drawn, along with the lesser 'powerful' in the neighborhood, and in the creation of networks of connections with their equals and superiors in other districts.⁷³ Dinners laid on for leading elements of the clientage probably played a vital part in solidifying the relations of dependence of clients on patrons (as well as

(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 11–103, 121–150; Ousterhout, *Visualizing Community*, 279–341; Veronica Kalas, "The Byzantine Kitchen in the Domestic Complexes of Cappadocia," in *Archaeology of the Countryside*, eds. Tasha Vorderstrasse and Jacob Roodenberg (Leiden: Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten, 2009), 109–127.

⁷¹ Rosemary Morris, "The Powerful and the Poor in Tenth-Century Byzantium: Law and Reality," *Past and Present* 73 (1976): 3–5, 13–17.

⁷² Household staff: *Peira*, 6.16, Carl E. Zachariae von Lingenthal, ed., *Jus graeco-romanum I, Practica ex actis Eustathii Romani*, (Leipzig: Weigel, 1854), 12. Travelling entourage: *V.Mich.*, cc. 6, 8.

⁷³ Jean-Claude Cheynet, *Pouvoir et contestations à Byzance (963–1210)* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1990), 287–301; William Danny, *Society and the State in Byzantium, 1025–1071* (PhD. diss., University of Oxford, 2007), 116–168.

tightening the bonds of friendship with neighbors), just as they could affirm the veneration of villagers for a local holy man and make manifest his connections with neighboring townsmen.⁷⁴ Hence the importance of the hall in the plans of rock-carved courtyard houses and of celebratory dinners in narratives of country life.

By the middle of the eleventh century, the leading aristocratic families would begin to merge, through intermarriage, into ramified clans, which could more than match the power of the crown in the localities. It was a time when Byzantium temporarily bestrode the Middle East and Eastern Europe. There were many gradations of power among the 'powerful'. Besides the greatest magnate families who cast their influence widely over the higher and lower echelons of society at the center as well as in the provinces, there were aristocratic families of high standing but with influence confined in the main to particular regions or districts.⁷⁵ Below them came those who may perhaps be classified as gentry – the richest among the peasants who distanced themselves from their fellow-villagers physically as well as socially, by moving out to farmsteads of their own, and military families owing service to the state as cavalrymen who, in the tenth century, were expected to own estates worth four pounds of gold.⁷⁶ A fourth component of the governing elite began to show itself from the middle of the eleventh century, a new group of leading urban citizens known as the *archontes*. They were, it may be conjectured, principally rentiers with land in the immediate vicinity of their cities, successful members of the commercial classes, and officials or descendants of officials who spent their careers in the lower ranks of the local administration.⁷⁷

Social control in the interior of Asia Minor in the early middle ages was exercised therefore by a new, country-based elite of those who had made successful careers in the army and the civilian administration. Their emergence marked a near-revolutionary change in the rural social order, taking the form of a

⁷⁴ For example, *V.Paul.*, 136–138: the food and drink for the annual feast which Paul of Latros laid on the first Sunday after Easter was provided, on one occasion, by his admirers in Miletus and Amyzon. Jeffreys, *Digenis Akritis*, 116–121 for wedding celebrations in a grand house.

⁷⁵ Cheynet, *Pouvoir et contestations*, 213–237.

⁷⁶ *Fiscal Treatise*, in Franz Dölger, *Beiträge zur Geschichte der byzantinischen Finanzverwaltung: besonders des 10. und 11. Jahrhunderts*, Byzantinisches Archiv 9 (Leipzig: Teubner, 1927), 115.24–37; Novel 5 (Constantinus VII Porphyrogenitus) in Nicolas. Svoronos, ed. and trans., *Les nouvelles des empereurs macédoniens concernant la terre et les stratiates* (Athènes: Centre de Recherches Byzantines, 1994), 118.9–12.

⁷⁷ Cf. Michael Angold, *The Byzantine Empire: A Political History* (London: Longman, 1984), 68–70, 248–252, 277–278.

dispersal over wide areas of the carriers of power and influence who had been concentrated previously in cities. For four centuries the city was superseded as the social organizing force in the localities. In the villages themselves, the established leadership was challenged, probably effectively, in the seventh century, but, before long, was reconstituted, possibly on a more meritocratic basis, with power gravitating to individuals of strong character, belonging to the more enterprising and successful families of the time. Village society itself was tightly knit and a significant social force in its own right, especially as it was recognized at the highest level as fundamental to the well-being of the state.

3 The Impact of Imperial Authority: the Army and the Fiscal Apparatus

Higher authority affected inner Asia Minor in many ways in Byzantium's early, dark period. The artificially strengthened natural redoubts which were dubbed *strongholds* were the most striking manifestations of the center's power, alongside its ability to mobilize and deploy fighting forces in the right places and at the right times to secure the plateau region against permanent encroachment by the Muslims. But cities were the principal conduits between center and localities. It was from the cities, reduced in size, heavily fortified, with living standards depressed, that the local agencies of government operated. The military, the judiciary, tax officials and civilian administrators were city-based. The city thus has to be reckoned an additional power-center in the localities, superior politically to the country house and the village.

Byzantium preserved the top-down system of government developed in states great and small in antiquity in western Eurasia (and paralleled in China, and later, in central and south America).⁷⁸ The evidence comes primarily in the form of (1) lists of rank, the first (known after its original editor as the *Tacticon Uspensky*) dating from the first half of the ninth century,⁷⁹ (2) inscriptions on the lead seals used by military commanders and civilian officials to authenticate and seal their correspondence,⁸⁰ and (3) the coins, gold, silver and copper,

⁷⁸ Andrew Monson and Walter Scheidel, eds., *Fiscal Regimes and the Political Economy of Pre-modern States* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 31–307.

⁷⁹ Nicolas Oikonomidès, *Les listes de préséance byzantines des IX^e et X^e siècles* (Paris: Éditions du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1972).

⁸⁰ For the historical contribution of seals, see Jean-Claude Cheynet and Claudia Sode, eds., *Studies in Byzantine Sigillography 1–10* (1987–2010) and Jean-Claude Cheynet, *La société byzantine: l'apport des sceaux*, 2 vols. (Paris: Association des Amis du Centre d'Histoire et Civilisation de Byzance, 2008).

issued by the mint in Constantinople.⁸¹ There was no questioning of the ultimate authority of the emperor, accepted by all as God's principal agent on earth, merely a readiness on the part of great magnates at opportune moments to seek supreme power for themselves. Success would simply mean that God had transferred his favor to a new beneficiary.⁸² Nor was there any weakening in the efficacy of the different arms of government. Roman law continued to be applied by the courts. Subjects continued to enjoy the right of appeal to higher courts in Constantinople, a process which Basil I (867–886), for example, made a show of facilitating, through the provision of free board for litigants during their stay in Constantinople.⁸³ Taxes continued to be raised. Supplies were collected for armies in transit.⁸⁴ There was no hiatus in the civil government of the localities.

How, then, was this achieved in such difficult circumstances? How did Byzantium succeed in maintaining an efficient and effective apparatus of government, when contemporary sedentary powers – the Tang dynasty in China (from 755), the Carolingians in western Europe and the Abbasid caliphs – all struggled to extract the resources they needed from the localities and to manage their great subjects?

Ultimately the preservation of a centralized state with effective downreach must be attributed to (1) a continuing high level of literacy which facilitated communications between center and localities,⁸⁵ (2) maintenance of an extensive road-system to facilitate the movement of officials, troops and goods,⁸⁶ (3) a functioning justice system respected by officialdom and subjects,⁸⁷ and

81 Philip Grierson, *Byzantine Coins* (London: Methuen, 1982), 150–188.

82 Gilbert Dagron, *Empereur et prêtre: Étude sur le "césaropapisme" byzantin* (Paris: Gallimard, 1996), 33–73.

83 *Vita Basiliī*, ed. and trans. Ihor Ševčenko, *Chronographiae quae Theophanis continuati nomine fertur liber quo Vita Basiliī imperatoris amplectitur*, Corpus fontium historiae Byzantinae 42 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2011), c. 31.13–21.

84 Constantinus Porphyrogenitus, *Tres tractatus de expeditionibus militaribus imperatoris*, ed. and trans. John Haldon, *Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae* 28 (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1990), text A and text B, lines 97–106, 145–147, 347–352, 396–398, 532–535.

85 Margaret Mullett, "Writing in Early Mediaeval Byzantium," in *The Use of Literacy in Early Mediaeval Europe*, ed. Rosamond McKitterick (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 156–185.

86 Anna Avramea, "Land and Sea Communications, Fourth–Fifteenth Centuries," in *Economic History of Byzantium: From the Seventh Through the Fifteenth Century*, ed. Angeliki Laiou (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2002), 1:57–77.

87 John Haldon, *Byzantium in the Seventh Century: The Transformation of a Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 254–280; Humphreys, *Law, Power and Imperial Ideology*, 86–88, 218–221, 250–253, 264.

(4) last but not least, the preservation of a monetized economy to lubricate transactions of all sorts, including those between government and subjects.⁸⁸ A key role, highlighted by Mark Whittow, was played by the annual distribution of salaries by the emperor or his representatives at court. The power to appoint and to dismiss post holders was vital, as was that of granting titles (each with emoluments attached). Both were in the emperor's gift. Ideology too, and its display in the regular round of court ceremonies played a crucial part in cementing the body politic together and inculcating respect for the emperor. Salaries, appointments, and the ideology of a Christian Roman empire, a latter-day Chosen People fighting for survival, could not but make a great impact on provincial mentalities. Villagers, townsmen and aristocrats, as well as the local representatives of central government and the army, were conscious of their membership of a beleaguered state. Authority was exercised effectively at local level, because all parties were amenable to its exercise.⁸⁹

The army was the most important component of the state in an era of war and had the greatest impact on the localities. The senior representatives of government in the provinces were the generals (*strategoi*) in command of regional forces, which were reinvigorated and rebranded after the devastating defeats of the 630s and early 640s. Initially, there were four such forces, collectively called the themes (*themata*), a term borrowed from the finest fighting forces known at the time, those of Turkic steppe nomads. The whole Asia Minor interior was covered by the four commands, when, in the early eighth century, they were stabilized in defined territories.⁹⁰ Consequently military personnel were distributed throughout the peninsula, whereas previously they had been confined to the eastern frontier zone and a minority of provinces where disorder was endemic. This might be termed *weak militarization*. The creation of *strongholds*

88 Cécile Morrisson, "Byzantine Money: Its Production and Circulation," in *Economic History of Byzantium*, ed. Angeliki Laiou (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 2002), 3:909–966, 946–958; Vivien Prigent, "The Mobilisation of Fiscal Resources in the Byzantine Empire (Eighth to Eleventh Centuries)," in *Diverging Paths: The Shapes of Power and Institutions in Medieval Christendom and Islam*, eds. John Hudson and Ana Rodríguez López (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 188–195.

89 Mark Whittow, *The Making of Orthodox Byzantium, 600–1025* (London: Macmillan, 1996), 106–113; Hélène Ahrweiler, *L'idéologie politique de l'empire byzantin* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1975), 29–36; Humphreys, *Law, Power and Imperial Ideology*, 93–105, 253–258.

90 James Howard-Johnston, "Thema," in *MAISTOR: Classical, Byzantine and Renaissance Studies for Robert Browning*, ed. Ann Moffatt, *Byzantina Australiensia* 5 (Canberra: Australian Association for Byzantine Studies, 1984), 189–197; Haldon, *Byzantium in the Seventh Century*, 208–220; Constantin Zuckerman, "Learning from the Enemy and More: Studies in 'Dark Centuries' Byzantium," *Millennium* 2 (2005), 125–134.

and the upgrading of the defenses of selected cities had a deeper impact, particularly in the exposed plateau region – this was *strong militarization*. But the most pervasive effect was the extension of recruiting to all categories of able-bodied men, so as to maintain the fighting capability of the state despite the shrinkage of its territory and population.

Al-Djarmī estimated the number of cavalry and infantry serving in the Asia Minor and Balkan themes at 120,000 men. Indirect corroboration is obtainable from official figures for expeditionary forces in the tenth century.⁹¹ The infantry, who probably formed at least three-quarters of the total, were recruited from peasant villagers. Whether or not there was conscription – taking the form, say, of a demand for a given number of recruits from each village – is not known. We may suspect that in an age of war, when military service and feats in battle were prized, that volunteers came forward in considerable numbers. What is not in doubt is that villagers were directly involved in the state's war for survival.⁹² Special measures may also have been taken to recruit highlanders. A *kleisurarch*, commander of a strategically important area normally on the frontier, and two *turmarchs*, ranking immediately below the theme general, are listed in the *Tacticon Uspensky* with territorial commands in the Taurus – the *kleisurarch* of Sozopolis in the Pisidian lake region, the *turmarch* of the Foederati (troops settled in the western Taurus in the course of the seventh century), and the *turmarch* of Lycaonia. Their singling out and their relatively high positions in the imperial ranking order point to an important military function, which is most readily identified as the channeling of highlanders into the armed forces.⁹³

Rather more is known about the recruitment of the cavalry, who were of higher status than the infantry. A heavier burden fell on them (they were required to provide their own mounts, weapons and armor) and the landholding needed to support it was greater. In their case there was no choice about their joining the army. They belonged to families which owed military service in return for regular pay and immunity from other forms of state service. Individual cavalrymen figure in saints' lives. One or two indeed achieved sanctity

⁹¹ Ibn Khurradādhbih, *al-Masālik*, 84; John Haldon, "Theory and Practice in Tenth-Century Military Administration," *Travaux et Mémoires* 13 (2000): 305–322.

⁹² Fedor Uspenskij, "Voennoe ustrojstvo vizantiskoj imperii," *Izvestija Russkogo Arkheologicheskogo Instituta v Konstantinopole* 6 (1901–1902): 182–184; James Howard-Johnston, "Studies in the Organization of the Byzantine Army in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries" (PhD diss., University of Oxford, 1971), 30–31, 103–104.

⁹³ *Tacticon Uspensky*, ed. and trans. Oikonomidès, *Listes de préséance*, 55.6–8. For a different interpretation, see Warren Treadgold, "Notes on the Numbers and Organization of the Ninth-Century Byzantine Army," *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies* 21 (1980): 280–284.

in later life.⁹⁴ In the tenth century, when emperors intervened to halt or at least to slow up changes to the social order judged to be deleterious to the state, they introduced legislation to secure the resource-base needed by the individual theme cavalry soldier. It was at this stage, under the personal rule of Constantine Porphyrogenitus (r. 945–959), that custom (*synetheia*), by which administrative practice is probably meant, was codified. Thenceforth the military family owing hereditary service in the cavalry was to register its landholding up to a minimum value of four pounds of gold, which was to be retained thenceforth.⁹⁵ A status akin to that of small gentry may be envisaged for such military families, both because of their comparative wealth and because of the prestige attached to military service. The resentment felt and expressed by cavalry families forcibly transferred to Thrace at the beginning of the ninth century by the Emperor Nicephorus I (r. 802–811) was aggravated when they learned that they were to be replaced by *poor villagers*. This episode provides clear evidence of a social divide between cavalry families and the peasantry.⁹⁶

Back in the darkest days in the middle of the seventh century, when all available fighting forces were concentrated in Asia Minor – the field armies of Armenia and the East, which had been driven back by the Muslims, the main Balkan field army transferred from Thrace,⁹⁷ and metropolitan forces – nothing whatsoever is reported about measures taken to provide billets and rations for troops outside the campaigning season. Such measures, however, were essential if disorder and looting were to be avoided and good relations were to be established between soldiers and civilians. There was no question of billeting them in cities, given the heavy fiscal demands being placed upon them and their consequent contraction. It may therefore be conjectured, with some confidence, that military units, both cavalry and infantry, were billeted in the

94 *VPhil.*, 72–75; *Vita S. Euthymii*, cc. 3, 5–6, ed. and trans. Louis Petit, “Vie et office de saint Euthyme le Jeune,” *Revue de l’Orient chrétien* 8 (1903): 170–171, 172–174; *Vita S. Lucae stylitae*, cc. 5–6, ed. Hippolyte Delehaye, *Les saints stylites*, Subsidia Hagiographica 14 (Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1923), 199–201.

95 Novel 5, ed. Svoronos, *Novelles*, 118–126. Cf. Lemerle, *Agrarian History*, 115–156; John Halidon, *Recruitment and Conscription in the Byzantine Army c. 550–950: A Study on the Origins of the Stratiotika Ktemata*, Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-historische Klasse Sitzungsberichte 357 (Verlag der österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften: Wien, 1979), 41–65.

96 Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. C. de Boor (Leipzig: Teubner, 1883), 1:486.10–26, with comments of Howard-Johnston, *Organization of Byzantine Army*, 31–38. Contra George Ostrogorsky, *History of the Byzantine State* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1968), 95–98.

97 Ralph-Johannes Lilie, “‘Thrakien’ und ‘Thrakesion’: Zur byzantinischen Provinzorganisation am Ende des 7. Jahrhunderts,” *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik* 26 (1977): 7–47.

country – a group of villages probably being assigned the duty of provisioning a given unit.⁹⁸ This hypothetical act of central government would have been the most intrusive of all, amounting as it did to the forcible grafting of bodies of fighting men from distant places onto individual localities throughout Asia Minor. In time, the infantry would have merged with the local peasantry, while the prestige of hereditary military service probably helped families with members serving in the cavalry to attract the labor necessary to cultivate estates larger than the normal peasant holding.

The strategy pursued by Byzantine generals was one of ultra-elastic defense. Theme armies jettisoned their wagon trains for pack-animals and cut loose from the roads. Their mission was (1) to avoid open, set-piece battles (except when a *stronghold* came under attack), (2) to secure the population and livestock of threatened localities from depredation, by orderly evacuation to safe places, and (3) to minimize damage by harassing enemy raiding and foraging parties and by compelling the invasion force to withdraw sooner rather than later, before the supplies which it had brought ran out. It was a *guerrilla strategy*, which might, if things went well, climax in an assault on enemy forces as they returned home through the frontier passes where the advantage of terrain favored the defenders. At all stages, it relied upon the active co-operation of civilian and soldier – above all to bring local knowledge into the army and to smooth the procedure of evacuation.⁹⁹ The authority of the military was prime in time of war but the civil authorities and populations at large had to be fully committed to what was a joint enterprise for success to be achieved. Through the local military commanders the authority of the center thus played upon the localities in the course of individual campaigns.¹⁰⁰

Yet more extensive and continuous was the exercise of fiscal authority in the localities. The tax system of the later Roman empire was not simply conserved in early medieval Byzantium, as it had to be in order to fund military and other state activities. It was refined into a sharp instrument which penetrated into the most distant, lowly recesses of the state. The key reform was from a distributive to a quantitative system. Tax liability was no longer allocated from the top down, beginning with a gross sum of revenue sought and its distribution down

⁹⁸ Cf. Haldon, *Recruitment and Conscription*, 66–81.

⁹⁹ Phocas, *De velitatione*, with Dagron's commentary 215–237; Howard-Johnston, *Organization of the Byzantine Army*, 188–237.

¹⁰⁰ Leo, *Tactica*, 1.9–12, 4.1–34, ed. and trans. George Dennis, *The Taktika of Leo VI*, Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae 49 (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 2010), 14–15, 46–57.

a hierarchy of tax districts, from praetorian prefecture through diocese and city to the individual rural community. Instead individual tax-payers were assigned a fixed liability, the sums being then aggregated from the bottom up to produce a stable, predictable revenue for the state. The signs are that Justinian II (685–695, 705–711) devised the system and that its introduction then encountered serious resistance. Its full implementation should probably be credited to Leo III and viewed as part of a general programme of reform.¹⁰¹ The main object was to increase the state's regular revenue, and thereby to sustain its resistance to Islam in the long years of struggle which lay ahead. Byzantium was following the example of Sasanian Iran over a century and a half after the shift from a share-cropping system (where the amount varied according to the harvests) to one of fixed liabilities introduced early in the reign of Khusro I Anūshirwān (531–579).¹⁰²

The effect in both Sasanian and Byzantine cases was to allocate a precise tax liability to every head of household in the country. For the first time, the fiscal authorities penetrated the carapace of village society and reached down to tap the resources of each household. At a stroke the relations of state to individual citizen were transformed. The individual was now accountable to authority and required to produce a specified sum of money each year. The tax register began to loom large in the collective life of Byzantium. Fiscal officials were expected to take the greatest care in compiling cadasters at all levels, from the village community (treated as a fiscal unit which was required to make good any shortfalls in individual payments) through lower and higher tax districts (*enoria* and *dioikeseis*) up to the Genikon, the revenue department in Constantinople. By the eleventh century, title to land and the exact definition of individual properties relied primarily on cadastral evidence. This derived from the general principles, in a society where land was plentiful and only acquired value with the input of human labor, (1) that payment of taxes was evidence of possession and cultivation of land, and (2) that possession turned automatically into ownership after thirty years.¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ Nicolas Oikonomidès, *Fiscalité et exemption fiscale à Byzance (IX^e–XI^e s.)* (Athènes: Institut de Recherches Byzantines, 1996), 24–29. But note the doubts of Prigent, "Mobilisation of Fiscal Resources," 202–205.

¹⁰² Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses*, 474–477; Zeev Rubin, "The Reforms of Khusro Anūshirwān," in *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East*, vol. 3, *States, Resources and Armies*, ed. Averil Cameron (Princeton: Darwin Press, 1995), 234–266. The distributive system may have remained in use in Sicily down to the 780s. See Anniese Nef and Vivien Prigent, "Contrôle et exploitation des campagnes en Sicile: le rôle du grand domaine et son évolution du VIII^e siècle à la fin du X^e siècle," in this volume.

¹⁰³ Full definitions of technical terms used in tax records: *Fiscal Treatise*, in Dölger, *Finanzver-*

It was the job of inspectors (*epoptai*) to keep tax registers up to date, noting all changes affecting persons and property, while collectors (*dioiketai*, literally ‘managers’) went on circuit to collect what was owing from individual village communities. Surtaxes, proportionate to tax paid, provided an incentive for efficient collection.¹⁰⁴ Considerable doubt has been voiced over the last twenty years or so about the form in which tax was paid. A group of influential Byzantinists, headed by John Haldon and Wolfram Brandes, has argued that the years of supreme crisis, from the 670s to the 730s, saw a general reversion to taxation in kind, which was placed in the hands of *kommerkiarioi* (the early medieval successors of the grand figures who oversaw the collection of customs duties on the frontiers of the empire in the sixth century, and the management of silk production and distribution). It is true that the function of *kommerkiarioi* changed in the second half of the seventh century and that a new institution, the *apotheke* (depository) of a circumscribed territorial area was placed under their control. But it is too great a leap of the imagination to suppose that *all* tax revenue was raised in kind and stored in *apothekai*. There is no evidence of the ramified logistical organization which such a system would have required. Indeed it would be hard to explain the voluntary abandonment of cash as the medium of exchange between governed and governors, after more than a millennium of experience of the benefits of substituting monetary transactions for exchanges of goods. Not to mention the overriding need to make the most efficient use of the limited resources of the rump Roman state in the war for survival in the Muslim Middle East.¹⁰⁵

There was definitely some connection between the appointment of *kommerkiarioi* with authority over *apothekai* and the war against Islam. For they are only attested (on the lead seals used to secure correspondence and to bond precious goods) for a limited period, from the 660s to the early 730s. These were critical years in which Byzantium was fighting for its life. The appointments were short-term, for one or two financial years, and moved around between different regions of Asia Minor. The geographical remit, defined in terms of late antique provinces, can be correlated, in several cases, with military activity. It

waltung, 114.22.–123.22. Inspection of tax records: *V.Ioann.* (P), c. 67. Tax records and title to land: *Peira*, 15.10, 36.23, 37.1.

¹⁰⁴ Staffing of Genikon, revenue department: Philotheus, *Cleto-rologium*, ed. and trans. Niko-laois Oikonomidès as: *Les listes de préséance byzantines des IXe et xe siècles* (Paris: Editions de Centre National de la Recherche Scientifiques, 1972), 113.26–114.4, with commentary at 313–314. Surtaxes: Oikonomidès, *Fiscalité*, 76–80.

¹⁰⁵ Oikonomidès, *Fiscalité*, 34–36 and Prigent, “Mobilisation of Fiscal Resources,” 185–188, 195–200, contra Haldon, *Byzantium in the Seventh Century*, 226–232 and Brandes, *Finanz-verwaltung*, 180–181, 204–205, 235–237, 298–300, 323–329, 379–384, 410–413, 421–426, 507.

may be concluded then that *kommerkarioi* were *inter alia* responsible for procurement of supplies and equipment for forces mobilized for action in nearby theatres of war. Whether procurement took the form of large-scale purchases with the proceeds of money taxation, *kommerkarioi* serving as the state's chief purchasing agents, or of direct fiscal extraction, is an open question. If it was the latter, i.e. a portion of taxes was raised in kind, the cash equivalent would presumably have been deducted from the tax liabilities of the contributors.¹⁰⁶

Something similar may be envisaged for the maintenance of troops outside the campaigning season, if, as has been suggested above, they were allocated, on their initial stationing in Asia Minor, to clusters of villages, with an entitlement to a given amount of supplies and billets. But the bulk of the revenues of the state were assuredly raised in cash, as in the past. The mint in Constantinople continued to issue gold and copper coins, year in, year out. The size of copper issues may have diminished, but there was undoubtedly a large stock of copper coins in the provinces, given the scale of copper issues in the sixth and seventh centuries (down to the reign of Constans II [641–669]) and a subsequent decline in population and economic activity. Newly minted copper coins continued to percolate beyond the capital and nearby provinces, to places, such as Amorium, garrisoned by troops or visited by troops in transit.¹⁰⁷ But it is the introduction of the *miliaresion*, a fiduciary silver coin worth one twelfth of a gold solidus, which provides the best evidence for widespread monetization. It was first minted in 720, for ceremonial distribution at the coronation of Constantine V as Leo III's co-emperor, but soon, from the 740s, it was being minted in large quantities to meet demand – not least because of its suitability, as a large fractional currency, for the payment of taxes.¹⁰⁸

The authority of the center was thus deeply impressed upon Asia Minor through the army and its installations and through the ubiquitous tax-system. Byzantium did not just continue in being as a well-developed polity in the era of crisis, but the organs of government were able significantly to increase their grip on society at large. There was a new military cast to life. Reputation gained through distinguished military service became an important contributor to sta-

¹⁰⁶ Brandes, *Finanzverwaltung*, 300–309, 329–365; Prigent, "Mobilisation of Fiscal Resources," 195–198.

¹⁰⁷ Morrisson, "Byzantine Money," 954–961; Christopher Lightfoot, "Byzantine Anatolia: Re-assessing the Numismatic Evidence," *Revue Numismatique* 158 (2002): 229–239; Christopher Lightfoot, "Coinage of the Amorian Dynasty Found at Amorium," *Travaux et Mémoires* 16 (2010): 503–511; Sophie Metivier and Vivien Prigent, "La circulation monétaire dans la Cappadoce byzantine d'après les collections des musées de Kayseri et de Niğde," *Travaux et Mémoires* 16 (2010): 577–618.

¹⁰⁸ Morrisson, "Byzantine Money," 928–930.

tus. It is no accident that the greatest concentration of aristocratic families was to be found in inner Asia Minor in the ninth and tenth centuries.¹⁰⁹ Most emerged from within the officer corps in the army, and put down their roots in the regions which they had fought to defend, where it is likely that the military and military feats were most respected. Byzantium may be characterized as a state geared to war, in which the soldier loomed large in the collective mind. The degree of militarization and military strength achieved was made possible by the state's ramified fiscal apparatus. An unprecedentedly large proportion of the surplus generated from agriculture, stock-raising and other economic activities was drawn off by the state. The resources of individual households were assessed and tabulated by fiscal officials, in a near-revolutionary change from classical systems of taxation. The state became more intrusive than ever before. The taxman played a leading role in the residual cities and rural localities. The tax year prevailed over other ways of calibrating time, whether by regnal years, years since Creation, or consulships (annual tenure thereof having lapsed in the course of the sixth century). The chroniclers' custom of dividing time into indictions, fifteen-year fiscal cycles, and of placing events in numbered years of a cycle (itself not numbered) was probably representative of society at large.¹¹⁰

4 Conclusion

Byzantium may be classified, as French Byzantinists have long emphasized, as a *strong state*. The hereditary principle, despite its innate attraction for humanity, was disregarded in the imperial ranking system. Honors were, without exception, personal.¹¹¹ The power of the center was enhanced by a careful balancing of the different arms of government in the localities. It was only in military emergencies, that the local commander could exercise supreme authority in his theme. The civilian administration, the local fiscal apparatus and the judiciary were otherwise independent agencies of government, answerable to higher authority at the center (appeal courts in the case of the judiciary).¹¹² Trade was probably brought under closer supervision than ever before, to guard against illicit appropriation of resources needed by the state. For it is highly improbable

¹⁰⁹ Cheynet, *Pouvoir et contestations*, 213–229, 321–336.

¹¹⁰ Venance Grumel, *Traité d'études byzantines*, vol. 1, *La chronologie* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1958), 192–203.

¹¹¹ Oikonomidès, *Listes de préséance*, 281–301.

¹¹² Philotheus, *Cleitorologium*, 113.26–35, 115.1–4 (Genikon), 121.3–14 (Sakellion). Phocas, *De velitatione*, 19.6–8 (judiciary).

that *kommerkiarioi* relinquished their traditional role of monitoring and taxing external trade, when they were put in charge of provinces in the interior. If, as seems probable, their remit extended beyond that of feeding and equipping the armed forces to oversight of trade, the *apothekai* over which they presided may be envisaged to have been state-controlled markets for exchanges of all sorts. It is indeed far from unlikely that in desperate times unprecedented measures may have been taken to manage the economy.

The strong state which took shape in the early eighth century was assertive in another sphere, where political authority seldom ventures with success, as is shown, for example, by the ninth-century drive to impose Mu'tazilism on the caliphate.¹¹³ The Emperor Leo III, with the active support of a party in the church, lit upon icon-veneration as the fundamental cause of God's anger with his special people, the Christian Romans. In 730 an iconoclast campaign was launched which lasted nearly two generations (until the 780s) and which was revived for another generation in the early ninth century. It pitted the authorities of church and state, who could deploy virtually unanswerable arguments, founded as they were in the Old Testament prohibition on images and the evident difficulty of preventing veneration from tipping over into worship, against a few notable champions of the iconophile cause, mainly monks but also some clergy. Reason was on the side of the reformers. Their arguments could not but weigh with those who defended the custom of venerating icons which had grown up and spread in late antiquity. It was above all the case based on notions of theodicy, of divine punishment for sin, which was hard to resist.¹¹⁴ But emotion, attachment to well-established modes of private prayer channeled through icons, could not be reasoned away. In the sphere of ideas, the state was not all-powerful, however much effort was invested in the campaign. The same was true of the economic and social spheres. Appetite for profit and private enterprise could be managed but not suppressed. The village with its strong internal bonding and the aristocracy, with its clientages and increasingly diffused connections, could put up resistance to what was dictated by the

¹¹³ Ahmed El Shamsy, "The Social Construction of Orthodoxy," in *The Cambridge Companion to Classical Islamic Theology*, ed. Tim Winter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 105–115.

¹¹⁴ Paul Alexander, *The Patriarch Nicephorus of Constantinople: Ecclesiastical Policy and Image Worship in the Byzantine Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 1958; Peter Brown, "A Dark Age Crisis: Aspects of the Iconoclastic Controversy," *English Historical Review* 88 (1973): 1–34, repr. in Peter Brown, *Society and the Holy* (London: Faber and Faber, 1982), 251–301; Brubaker and Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast*, 79–155, 176–212, 234–247, 260–286, 366–385, 389–404, 447–452.

center in hectoring pieces of legislation. There was no question of abject submission to the power of the throne, but much quiet resistance and, over one issue, landownership in the tenth century, open combat.¹¹⁵

Nonetheless the defining characteristic of early medieval Byzantium was the power of crown and state. Seldom, if ever, has the authority of a state been exercised so effectively as in the interior of Asia Minor in the seventh–ninth centuries, to judge by the extent of militarization and fiscal outreach.¹¹⁶ Of course, the exercise of authority was facilitated by the willing participation of soldiers and civilians, members of the governing apparatus and those dragged down close to penury, townsmen and countrymen, in the war effort. The threat from without encouraged solidarity among the different component parts of Byzantium and a shared ideological commitment to a divinely sanctioned war against a superior, ideologically aggressive enemy.

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¹¹⁵ Cheynet, *Pouvoir et contestations*, 157–190, 321–336; James Howard-Johnston, “Crown Lands and the Defence of Imperial Authority in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries,” *Byzantinische Forschungen* 21 (1995): 75–100.

¹¹⁶ Cf. James Howard-Johnston, “Gibbon and the Middle Period of the Byzantine Empire,” in *Edward Gibbon and Empire*, eds. Rosamond McKitterick and Roland Quinault (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 53–77.

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